



Coming Soon: Affordable Housing Citywide?

Posted by [Pierluigi Oliverio](#) on Monday, December 17, 2007

City Hall Diary

No, I am not referring to the subprime mortgage crisis and the subsequent foreclosures but rather last week's three-hour city council study session regarding inclusionary housing. Many comments were expressed on how inclusionary housing should be dispersed. What exactly is "inclusionary housing?" Is it for extremely low income (ELI), or for others? No one can argue that San Jose has not done a good job at building affordable housing, especially when you compare San Jose to other municipalities in the Bay Area.

San Jose has typically moved forward with infill development specifically within RDA areas. Most of the RDA areas are located downtown or in SNI areas. The San Jose Redevelopment Agency puts 20 percent of their funds (tax increment) aside for affordable housing which has built over 10,000 units.

The purpose of the study session was for city staff to clearly define inclusionary housing, how it has been done in other cities and the potential benefits and impacts of a citywide policy. Many interest groups attended the session, including PACT, Catholic Charities, Home Builders Association, labor groups, the Chamber of Commerce, Sierra Club and others.

The overview was a good start with a variety of views expressed from staff, consultants and builders. Ideas included taxing homeowners every time a home is sold with some type of transfer tax, adding taxes to developers and/or landowners as the cost of building in San Jose for a greater good. There were other ideas of allowing higher densities on housing developments to make it pencil out for developers or allow for preferential zoning when it comes to affordable housing.

There were many thoughtful speakers from the audience who shared personal stories regarding how they spend 50-70 percent of their income on rent alone. Even working full time as a senior cashier at Home Depot still meant sharing a room in a rental unit.

Teachers spoke who sacrifice income for service and are having difficulty with finding affordable housing. Then there were comments from double-income young people who wanted to buy their first home but felt that affordable housing drives up the cost of entry-level market housing.

The council voted unanimously to allow an additional six months of study and outreach on this topic. Please take advantage of this opportunity to share your opinions and ideas regarding inclusionary housing.

Is there a moral responsibility for all cities to provide affordable housing?

Does San Jose have a larger responsibility than other cities since we have more land?

Should affordable housing be citywide or in certain areas?

Should we target affordable housing to certain groups? Seniors? Occupations like teaching and public safety?

Has San Jose done enough for affordable housing and now it's time for other cities to step up to the plate?

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